

SOME OBSERVATIONS  
RELATIVE TO THE  
TREATMENT  
OF  
HOOPING-COUGH.

BY RICHARD PEARSON, M. D. F. A. S.

---

---

*Read May 21, 1806.*

---

---

**ALTHOUGH** I have found, as every practitioner must have done, that antimonial emetics afford very great relief in the early stage of the hooping-cough, and at a time when the patients, and especially very young patients, are oppressed and nearly suffocated by phlegm; yet I have been generally disappointed when I have attempted to *cure* this disorder, by Dr. Fothergill's emetic powder, frequently repeated, and persisted in for a considerable length of time, conformably to the directions given by that physician. In fact, when we administer that, or any other vomiting medicine, we do little more than alleviate

a particular symptom, without making much, if any, impression on the proximate cause of the disease. The cough and spasmodic affection of the respiratory organs are mitigated for the time by the administration of an emetic; but under such treatment these symptoms too commonly recur at the stated periods, with as much violence as before.

I have, therefore, found it necessary to deviate very considerably from Dr. Fothergill's plan, employing emetics much less frequently, and for a much shorter time than he directs.

After the accumulation of phlegm has been brought away by an antimonial vomit, I prescribe a medicine compounded of opium, ipecacuanha, and prepared natron. To a child between one and two years old, I give this medicine in the following proportions, viz.: one drop of tincture of opium, five drops of ipecacuanha-wine, and two grains of prepared natron, made into a small draught with syrup and water, and repeated every fourth hour, for several days; taking care to remove costiveness, whenever it occurs, by calomel and rhubarb. These draughts operate as an antispasmodic, producing at the same time some diaphoretic effect. Having stated the dose for an infant after the first year, it will be easy to apportion the quantity to other ages.

Various narcotics (such as hemlock, hyoscyamus, belladonna, &c.) have been recommended in this

disorder, by different practitioners. I am disposed to believe they have all proved serviceable, though I have never had a desire to prescribe them in the hooping-cough, myself, having always found opium to answer my purpose. And those practitioners, (I am persuaded) would have found it unnecessary to employ such a variety of narcotic drugs, if they had previously tried the effects of opium, in proper doses, and in combination with proper auxiliaries.

It is obvious, that the ipecacuanha wine, in the small doses above-mentioned, is not intended to operate as an emetic. In what manner the fixed alkali proves serviceable, I shall not at present hazard a conjecture; but I can assure the Society, that the same beneficial effects are not produced by opium and ipecacuanha alone. Perhaps the vegetable fixed alkali might answer equally well with the prepared natron; but this I cannot assert from any comparative trials\*.

When, by the use of the above-mentioned medicine for some days, the hooping-cough paroxysms are ren-

\* What induced me in the first instance to prescribe the prepared natron along with the ipecacuanha and opium, was the sour smell of the slimy fluid brought away by vomiting.—Perceiving the good effects of the natron, I continued it; and since that time I have always joined the alkali with the other remedies. But although that circumstance first led me to prescribe the fixed alkali in the hooping-cough; yet I am by no means disposed to refer its beneficial operation in such cases, merely to its power of correcting acidity.

dered less frequent and less violent, the ipecacuanha-wine is omitted, and a sufficient dose of the gum myrrh is substituted in its place; the quantity of opiate tincture is diminished, while the proportion of alkaline salt remains the same. The gum myrrh I have found preferable in this disorder to the Peruvian bark, especially in the instance of very young children. In the form of combination last mentioned, it proves sufficiently tonic, and at the same time has a tendency to prevent costiveness.

While I recommend to the notice of the society the medicines above-mentioned, in the treatment of hooping-cough, I wish it to be understood, that they are not to supersede the use of bleeding, blistering, and other anti-inflammatory measures whenever this disorder is accompanied with evident symptoms of pneumonia: and even when the hooping-cough is not complicated with inflammation of the lungs, yet if the respiratory action be much disturbed from spasm or otherwise, a blister may be applied at any period of the disorder with advantage.